



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: 600 Capitol Way N • Olympia, WA 98501-1091 • (360) 902-2200, TDD (360) 902-2207
Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building • 1111 Washington Street SE • Olympia, WA

March 10, 2003

TO: Wildlife Enthusiasts

FROM: Dave Brittell, Assistant Director
Wildlife Program

SUBJECT: 2003-05 HUNTING SEASON RECOMMENDATIONS

Attached are the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) recommendations for the 2003-05 Hunting Seasons. We encourage you to review these regulations and submit your comments to WDFW, Attention 03-05 Hunting Season Comments, 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091, by March 31, 2003 or by email to wildthing@dfw.wa.gov. You are also encouraged to attend the Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting in Moses Lake on April 11-12 to provide your comments in person.

These recommendations are based on the objectives and strategies identified in the recently adopted 2003-08 Game Management Plan. They have been significantly shaped and modified after receiving public comments during the last four months and are ready for your final review prior to Commission action at the April meeting.

Disabled, Youth, and Senior Special Hunting Opportunities

One of the most significant changes in these recommendations is providing additional opportunity for disabled, youth, and senior hunters. The public identified this theme as a priority during the development of the Game Management Plan. These recommendations were developed in close coordination with the public through surveys, public meetings, email, written input, and oral comments.

A number of antlerless deer permits have been set-aside for these groups. Out of over 13,000 permits that include antlerless opportunity across the state, over 125 permits are recommended for hunters with disabilities, nearly 2,000 for youth, and 500 permits for seniors. This is in addition to continuing antlerless general season opportunity for white-tailed deer in many of the 100 series game management units (GMUs).

We are recommending that the youth and disabled hunter "any deer" season in many north central Washington GMUs be changed from a general season to a permit season. This addresses

concerns from many hunters about the general season, will allow us to better control harvest rates, and to distribute participants.

Expanded youth opportunity is also recommended for upland game birds and a new opportunity is recommended for spring turkey hunting. A new moose hunting opportunity is also recommended for hunters with disabilities. Permits are being recommended for one of the more accessible areas in northeast Washington.

Equitable Allocation of Opportunity Among Hunters

In order to reduce crowding and provide a variety of hunting opportunities, deer and elk hunters in Washington must choose between separate archery, muzzleloader, and modern firearm hunting seasons. At times, this situation results in a competition for allocation of hunting opportunity between the different groups. WDFW is developing more objective criteria for making decisions on which group should receive new opportunity. The idea is to look at statewide participation rates for each of the three groups and attempt to achieve those rates in each of seventeen districts across the state. In addition, we are trying to achieve hunter harvest, which is proportionate to group size. These criteria will result in better distribution of hunting opportunities and a more equitable way to determine which group receives available opportunity.

After careful deliberations with hunters, the attached recommendations begin to better distribute opportunity. When available, the guideline is to provide additional opportunity to the group that is furthest behind in participation rate or proportion of harvest. However, all groups would share reductions in opportunity, at some level, when necessary due to resource or management concerns.

Summary of Major Changes:

Small Game Season Recommendations:

- Establish a consistent opening day in eastern Washington for all upland birds (pheasant, chukar, gray partridge, and quail) on the first Saturday in October
- Add gray partridge and chukar to youth weekend in September
- Add a youth spring turkey hunt the weekend prior to the general season in select game management units
- Increase permit levels for fall turkey hunting
- Shorten the September eastern Washington Canada goose season to one weekend, so the days can be added to the regular season

Deer Season Recommendations:

- Extend the modern firearm general season in the Okanogan and Chelan areas by five days
- Consider restricting whitetail buck harvest in GMUs 101-124 to 3 point or better for all groups -OR- maintain whitetail buck season in GMUs 101-124 as per previous regulation; the attachment shows two options, however WDFW will make a recommendation to the Commission pending further assessment and public comment (there is an error in the

package, late archery whitetail seasons for these same units should have included both these options as well)

- Change the late whitetail season in GMUs 127-142 to permit only
- Extend antlerless mule deer for entire early season for archers in several southeast Washington GMUs
- Add antlerless mule deer opportunity in several GMUs in the Yakima and Ellensburg areas for archers during both early and late seasons
- Add late “any whitetail” opportunity in several north central Washington GMUs for archers
- Add two days onto the early muzzleloader deer season
- Expand early muzzleloader deer seasons in over 12 GMUs
- Expand or shift late muzzleloader deer seasons in 5 GMUs
- Create a separate pool of permits for muzzleloader deer hunters, with over 300 new permits
- Provide 1150 antlerless “B” tags that allow hunters to take a second deer
- Create several “deer areas” from parts of GMUs

Elk Season Recommendations:

- Modify the definition of a three point elk
- Shift the early archery elk season to start after Labor Day and run 14 days
- Add several GMUs in the Yakima and Colockum elk herd areas for early muzzleloader seasons and a couple in western Washington
- Shorten the late muzzleloader season in two units in Klickitat county
- Provide a separate pool of antlerless elk permits for muzzleloader hunters
- Create several “elk areas” from parts of GMUs

Equipment Regulation Recommendations:

- Add regulations to make the use of night vision equipment and laser sights illegal for deer and elk hunting
- Modify the archery equipment regulation to set minimum arrow weight of 300 grains

DB:DW:rrh

Attachment